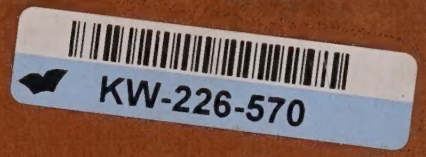
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SOME WESSEX SKETCHES

BY

A. DOROTHY HOLMES

WITH A FOREWORD BY

JOHN SHIRLEY-FOX, R.B.A.

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TO
THOMAS HARDY, O.M.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

		PAGE
1.	Winchester Cathedral	3
2.	Romsey Abbey	7
3.	St. Anne's Gate, Salisbury	11
4.	Wardour Castle	15
5.	St. Peter's Church, Shaftesbury	19
6.	Old Cottage Shaftesbury,	23
7.	Club House, Iwerne Minster	27
8.	Co-operative Stores, Iwerne Minster	31
9.	Wimborne Abbey	35
10.	Ballard Point, Bournemouth	39
11.	St. Martin's Church, Wareham	43
12.	Corfe Castle	47
13.	Corfe Church and Houses	51
14.	Corfe	55
15.	View of Dorchester	59
16.	Chapter House and Chain Gate, Wells	63
17.	Palace Gateway, Wells	67
18.	The Bishop's Palace, Wells	71
19.	The Bishop's Eye, Wells	75
20.	The Crown Yard, Wells	79
21.	Roofs of Old Houses, Wells	83
22.	Darshill, Shepton Mallet	87
23.	Bruton	91
24.	Monk's Conduit, Sherborne	95
25.	Sherborne Abbey	99
26.	The Almshouses, Sherborne	103

FOREWORD

TO most of those who like myself were born and bred in Wessex, there is no place like The West Country !

We are willing to concede to natives of Northumbria the wild grandeur of their lonely moors and the rugged beauty of their stoney rock-strewn rivers, or to East Anglians or Mercians the many special charms of their respective districts ; but to us who come from the West there is no other part of England that we love so well.

When, as so often happens to us later on in life, the claims of work or duty take us far from the place of our birth, we carry with us memories of our grand old native downs and softly flowing chalk streams that prove a frequent solace to us during the time of our exile ; and when by good fortune we are able to revisit the familiar scenes of our youth, we delight to climb to some point high up upon the hills and look down upon the fertile valleys below and think about the past. We think of the time when most of the lower ground was little more than impenetrable forestland, and how the Romans came and established their camps in many places and drove their fine undeviating roads in all directions and thus prepared the way for their Saxon successors. Not many Roman structures now remain above ground, and those of Saxon times are few and far between, but of the great work accomplished by the master builders from Normandy there are still to be found a host of fine examples. Most of these have been added to or modified in Plantagenet and Tudor times, but these Gothic additions serve but to embellish the buildings of which they form part.

Many of the cathedrals and churches of Wessex are unsurpassed for beauty and archæological interest. Where can be found a more magnificent example of man's work than Winchester Cathedral, or a finer specimen of progressive architectural style than Sherborne Abbey ? And besides these more important

buildings there are countless old houses, streets, towns and villages that provide an endless wealth of material for study.

Mrs. Dorothy Holmes who now lives in the district has been greatly impressed by the numerous places and objects of interest to be seen within easy reach of her home, and has during the course of her wanderings recorded with pen and pencil some of her impressions.

The result of her work contained in this book will be found to unite those most important qualities which are essential in any work of art—Sincerity and Simplicity. She has done her best to put down simply and without affectation what has most appealed to her, and her drawings are faithful and conscientious renderings of a number of the most interesting and picturesque places in her neighbourhood.

To those who know Wessex, and have come under the spell of its remarkable attractions, the book should prove a valuable souvenir, and those who do not must surely be prompted by the enthusiasm of the authoress to wish to see for themselves the places which have impressed her so deeply.

JOHN SHIRLEY-FOX.

Rosetti Studios, Chelsea, 1925.

I

WINCHESTER, Hants

I

WINCHESTER, Hants

Caer Gwent, as this town was called by the early British, is historically the most interesting city in England. Cerdic made it his capital in 520, and it was destined to remain the capital of Wessex for many centuries.

The Cathedral is the longest Gothic building in the world, its severe exterior gives little hint of the beauty and majesty of the interior.

II

ROMSEY, Hants

II

ROMSEY, Hants

The Abbey was founded by Edward the Elder, son of Alfred the Great about 910, and his daughter St. Alfreda was the first Abbess. Between 1125 and 1220 the church was practically re-built, and it has since then undergone a good deal of restoration. The transition from Norman to Early English is most interesting, as are also the Pointed and the Perpendicular windows, and the Early English doors.

In 1625 the two upper stories of the Tower were pulled down, and unfortunately a wooden belfry erected, which stands to-day.

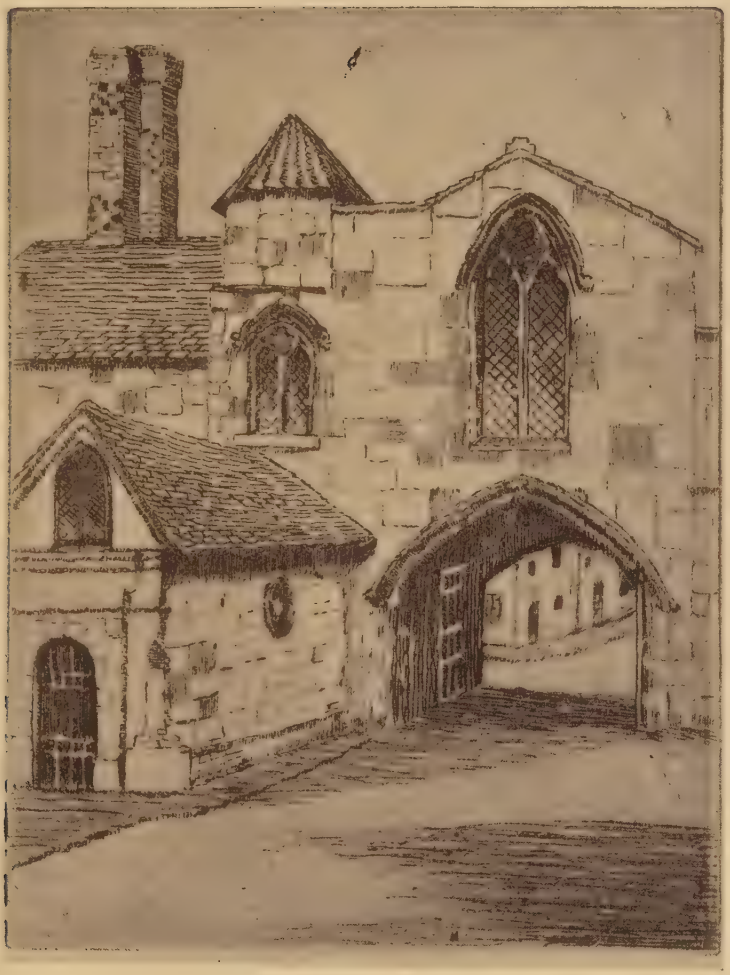
III

SALISBURY, Wilts

III

SALISBURY, Wilts

St Anne's Gate, from which many people consider the finest view of the Cathedral is to be had. In the house to the left of this gate, Henry Fielding is supposed to have lived. His Grandfather was a Canon of the Cathedral.



IV

WARDOUR, Wilts

IV

WARDOUR, Wilts

A small portion of the ruins of this historic old Castle, which appears to have been built in the reign of Richard II. It stands in the parish of Tisbury.

During the Civil Wars it was defended by Lady Blanche Arundell, in the absence of her husband, who was fighting for Charles. It fell to the Parliamentary troops in May, 1643. They did not hold it for very long however, for although Lord Arundell was wounded, and died at that time, his son re-captured, nearly destroying it, early in the next year.

V

SHAFTESBURY, Dorset

V

SHAFTESBURY, Dorset

St. Peter's Church. The only old church left out of twelve, including the famous Abbey, which once graced old Shaston. Of fine Perpendicular architecture, the noble old tower stands on the crest of the sharp descent down Gold Hill, scene of one of the two first mints in England. The beautiful parapet of the North aisle, pierced and battlemented, the lower frieze embodying the Tudor Rose, is of fifteenth century workmanship. Remnants of fan-vaulting remain in the porch.

VI

SHAFTESBURY

VI

SHAFTESBURY

Sixteenth Century House, formerly the priest's dwelling attached to St. John's, which Church had already been destroyed when a map was brought out in 1603. Only a part of the crypt, found during alterations in 1922, and a bit of wall remain, in what are now outbuildings. Partitions of reed and wattle in the old parts of the house, prove beyond doubt its great age. The South and West windows have an unrivalled view out beyond the village of St. James, far below, and over the famous Vale of Blackmore. On the North can be seen, on a clear day, Glastonbury Tor.

A.D.Holmes

VII

IWERNE MINSTER, Dorset

VII

IWERNE MINSTER, Dorset

The picturesque Club House, recently built by Mr. James Ismay out of old material in the antique style to blend with the lovely old-world village.

VIII

IWERNE MINSTER

VIII

IWERNE MINSTER

The Co-operative Stores, also recently re-built in most fascinating style.

IX

WIMBORNE, Dorset

IX

WIMBORNE, Dorset

The wonderful old Minster seems to have been founded early in the eighth century. The Saxon church was destroyed, probably during the period when the Danes over-ran the country. The central tower is Norman, but the spire, which was erected in the thirteenth century, fell ; and the queer pinnacles and battlements were added in 1608. The Western Tower was built in 1450.

The architectural medley is clearly seen in the arches of the nave, which are represented by Decorated, late Transitional, and early Transitional. The Choir is of late Norman and early English. The East window forms one of the earliest examples of " plate " tracery.

X

BOURNEMOUTH

X

BOURNEMOUTH

Ballard Point. Where one isolated rock stands out to sea, there were once three—Old Harry and his wife have succumbed to the fierce onslaught of the sea, and now old Harry's daughter stands alone, awaiting her fate.

These chalk cliffs guard the entrance to Poole Harbour from the South West, and have to bear the full brunt of the storms.

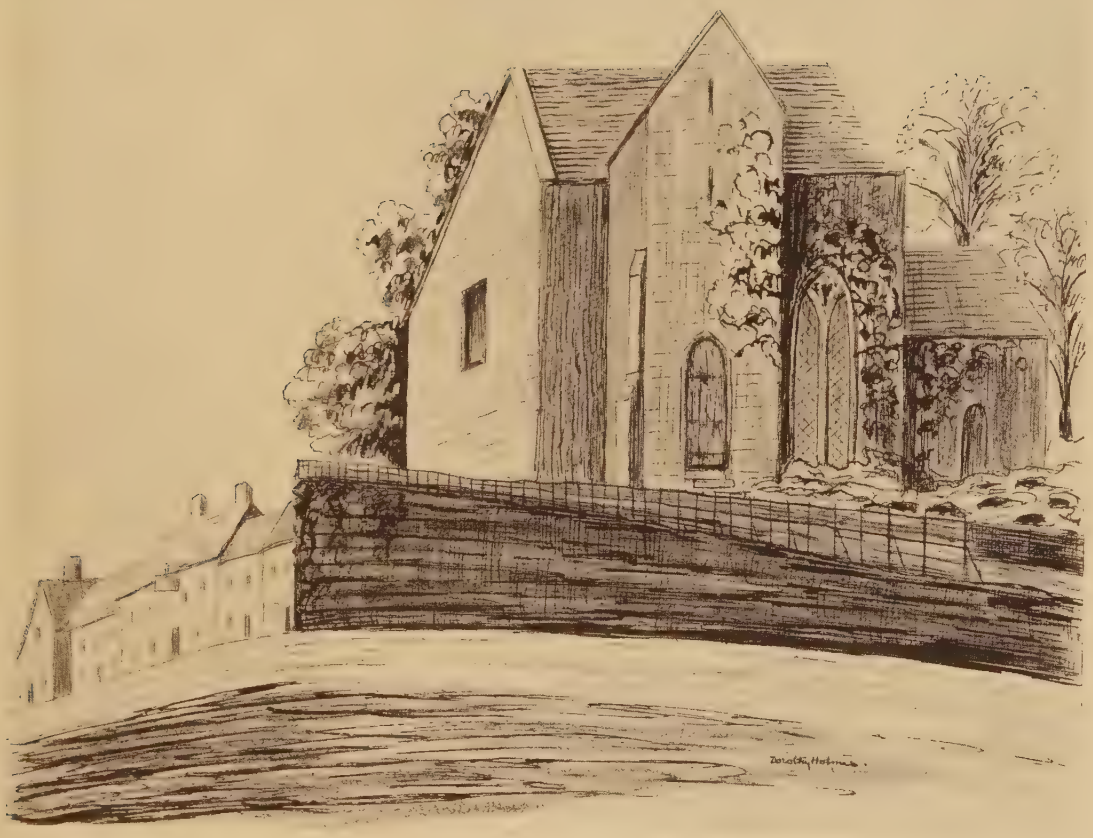
XI

WAREHAM, Dorset

XI

WAREHAM, Dorset

St. Martin's Church perched on a bank at the North end of the town, is a Saxon building. In 800 Beohtric, King of Wessex, was laid to rest here, though his remains were afterwards removed to Tewkesbury.



XII

CORFE, Dorset

XII

CORFE, Dorset

Corfe Castle is said to have been founded by the Saxon King Edgar. Edward the Martyr was murdered there by his step-mother, Queen Elfrida, in 978. His remains were taken to Shaftesbury and interred in the Abbey. Edward II. was imprisoned there in 1327.

In 1643 the Castle was gallantly defended by Lady Banks, during the Civil Wars. It finally fell to the Parliamentary troops owing to treachery in 1646.

GREYHOUND INN

XIII

CORFE

XIII

CORFE

The Church of St. Edward the Martyr has been entirely rebuilt, save for the fine old Perpendicular Tower. One of the memorial windows is to Lady Banks, the heroic defender of the Castle.

XIV

CORFE

XIV

CORFE

One of the two principal streets. The village is quaint in the extreme, winding and climbing up the hill, and the cottages are a study in colour in the autumn, with their gray stone roofs and the creepers all ablaze.

XV

DORCHESTER

XV

DORCHESTER

A PLEASANT old fashioned town which has known many vicissitudes. The Romans fortified it, and incidentally left behind them many momentoes of their occupation. It suffered greatly under the Saxons and Danes. It was burnt to the ground in 1003, and again in 1613. St. Peter's Church is a fine example of the Perpendicular, with an earlier Norman Porch. Outside stands a monument to Barnes, the Dorsetshire poet, who died in 1886.

Thomas Hardy, the great author and authority on Wessex, lives not far from the town.

XVI

WELLS, Somerset

XVI

WELLS, Somerset

The Chapter-house and Chain Gate. Nearly 600 years has this glorious Cathedral stood, proudly testifying to the consummate skill and art of its architects and builders, and defying the elements, which have only succeeded in giving it the tender harmonious tints of venerable old age. The most perfect building in Europe, and the fairest jewel of our proud English heritage.

XVII
WELLS

XVII

WELLS

The entrance gateway to the Bishop's Palace. A little bell is placed near the water on the left tower, which the swans ring when they are hungry.

XVIII
WELLS

XVIII

WELLS

The Bishop's Palace, and part of the moat which surrounds it, the waters of which are fed from the three springs in a pool in the garden, which gave to Wells its name.

XIX
WELLS

XIX

WELLS

The Bishop's Eye, an old gateway leading from the Palace into the town square. Like most old things in Wells, in a wonderful state of preservation.

XX
WELLS

XX

WELLS

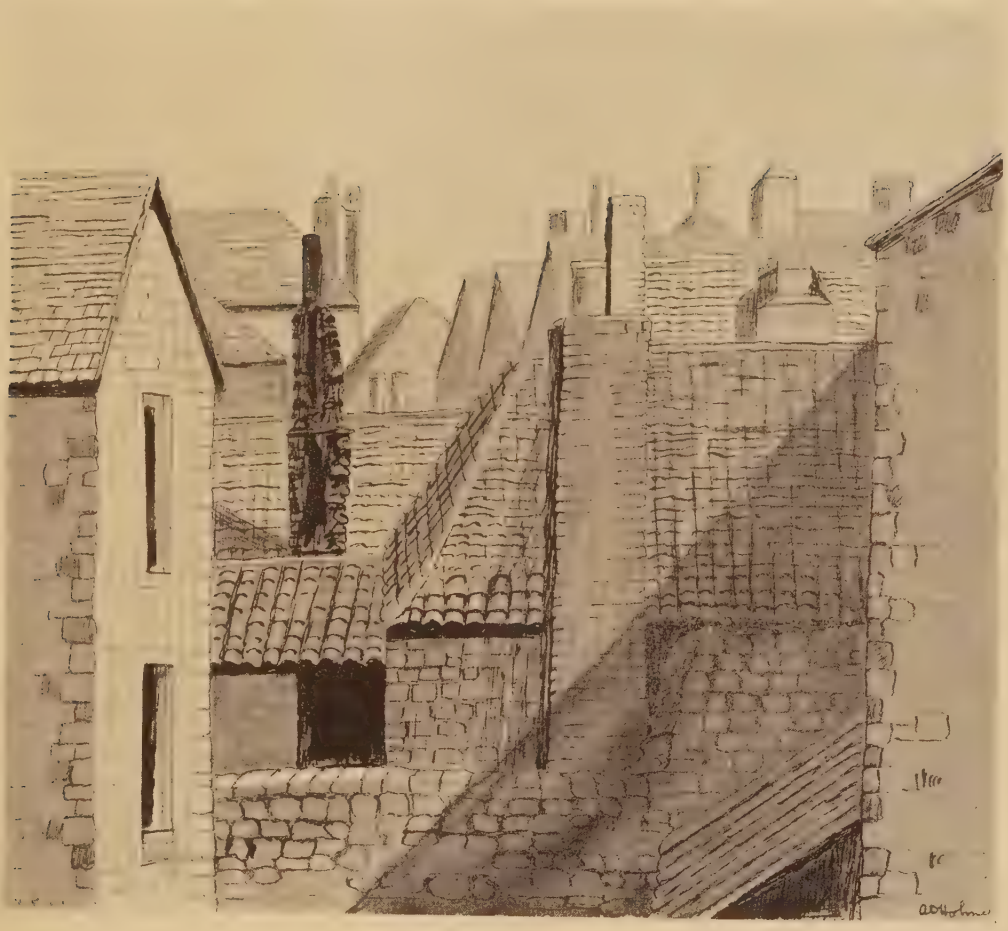
The Crown Yard. The most interesting example of domestic architecture ; the carved oak is extraordinarily beautiful, and the old windows with their odd panes are singularly attractive. William Penn who founded Pennsylvania once preached from one of them.

XXI
WELLS

XXI

WELLS

Old roofs which remind one of Nürnberg, viewed from the back of the Swan Hotel.



XXII

SHEPTON MALLET, Somerset

XXII

SHEPTON MALLET, Somerset

Darshill. Old houses near the silk mills a short distance from Shepton Mallet. Like several old villages in this neighbourhood, the water and hills, added to the quaint pitch of the roofs, give it quite a Continental air.

XXIII

BRUTON, Somerset

XXIII

BRUTON, Somerset

The fine church, with its two towers of unequal height, stands at the foot of the town, by the old stone bridge over the river Brew. The town boasts a medieval bridge, and a fine old building, the Sexey Hospital, containing a finely panelled Hall-chapel.

XXIV

SHERBORNE, Dorset

XXIV

SHERBORNE, Dorset

The Monks' Conduit, old houses, and the Abbey. The Conduit was built in 1349, and formerly stood in the cloisters, but was removed to Chepe Street to take the place of a market cross.

XXV

SHERBORNE

XXV

SHERBORNE

The magnificent Abbey was founded in 705 ; its first bishop being Aldhelm. At that time Sherborne was the capital of the Western extension of Wessex. Its early Bishops were leaders and fighters in the terrible struggles against the Danes. One Bishop, Ealhstan, was contemporary with Alfred the Great, and not only defeated the Danes, and helped to keep Wessex for the English, but to him we owe much of our knowledge about Alfred. The Abbey incorporates many types of architecture ; the tower and transepts retaining Norman characteristics, early English and Decorative supervene, and the Perpendicular work is extremely fine.

The flying buttresses are also beautiful, but the most perfect gem of all is the wonderful fan-vaulting.

XXVI
SHERBORNE

XXVI

SHERBORNE

The Almshouse or Hospital, is a venerable fifteenth century building. The Chapel contains a very remarkable tryptych as Altar-piece.

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